the one spot, and covetous of farthings on the other."

In April I again visited the excavations on the site of the Royal Exchange, as I perceived hundreds were in the habit of doing daily *without orders*. At this time the pit alluded to was being excavated, and I made hasty sketches, and took notes occasionally, but not without fear of a recurrence of former direct obstruction. My visits did not admit of such minute examination as the subject demanded, but *no quarrel took place*, no complaints could have been made, for I never remember being there without seeing Mr. Russell, the clerk of the works, or some of the gentlemen from Mr. Tite's office, and I must have heard of the complaints if there had been any. On no occasion did I ever interfere with anybody, and the only charges that can be imagined to have been made must have been those preferred more than two months previous, which I have shown were absurd and false. I hasten now to the stories about the bell, and the leaden medalet, or jetton. Mr. Tite had read in the "Archæologia" that a bell, among other objects, had been found in the pit, but he has never visited my museum to ascertain if I actually possessed this enviable relic, and, if so, how and by what means, and at what period of time. He has not, in fact, taken the trouble to ascertain the truth of any of the trumpery tales upon which he seems to have founded his accusations against my conduct and character.

When, by the circulation of handbills, by "boarding round the site," and by other means considered necessary to their archæological *battue*, the Joint Committee of Gresham Affairs had had the run of the cover to themselves, I proceed to show how, alone, and single-handed, I succeeded in preserving what these zealous gentlemen, with their handbills and boards, had overlooked. Mr. Tite says truly that this pit was filled with soft peaty earth; but Mr. Tite is not perhaps aware that this soft peaty earth contained many minor objects of interest which it was impossible to detect by boards and handbills, and which were carted away in this soft peaty earth, and disposed of at a remote distance from the site of exhumation in an open unfenced situation, accessible to anybody who might have cared to examine it. From this rejected "soft peaty earth," far from the Royal Exchange, I procured, from time to time, many curious objects of ancient art, which certainly, but for my exertions, would never have been discovered and preserved.

Mr. Tite's "Mountain in Labour" produces a bell, and a medalet in lead! The latter he says, "is a very remarkable curiosity, and surely the only proper place for such could not be any private collection." This little peace of lead came into my possession long before I had the honour of knowing Mr. Tite, although he says he is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of some standing. It was met with during some partial excavation, before the general works commenced. So little consequence did I attach to it, that it remained for months upon my table before I was induced to examine and clean it, when I deciphered an inscription and the Tudor arms. It was previously a lump of worthless lead, but I regenerated its defaced impress, and thus *made* it an object of interest, but surely not an object to be envied the possession of. I exhibited it to the Numismatic Society, and to the Society of Antiquaries; I freely permitted a wood-cut of it to be made for one of the pictorial weekly newspapers; and I adapted the inscription to the obverse of a medal of Prince Albert, designed by me, and engraved by Mr. Stothard * to commemorate the Prince's advent to lay the first stone of the New Royal Exchange, the Joint Gresham Committee having omitted to order a medal to be engraved to record this interesting event. If Mr. Tite will now point out to me the more proper place, where he insinuates a better use would have been made of this farthing's-worth of lead, I will cheerfully cede possession of it. Had I been a servant of the corporation, and seized some thirty or forty gold nobles, on behalf of the city, and had never rendered to science or to the city exchequer a proper account of the *treasure trove*, then Mr. Tite might, with some reason and justice, have imputed to me "personal objects," and have worthily stood forward as a public accuser. But, I trust, I have said enough to show that the accusations brought against me are frivolous, vexatious, and false; that they have all the appearance of being *an after-thought*, and are calculated to mislead the public, and to injure private character; that they neither apply to me nor to my colleagues in the city, and that they are unworthy the office Mr. Tite holds, through which office he has thought proper to disseminate them.—I am, Sir, &c.,

CHARLES ROACH SMITH.

5, Liverpool-street, City, Dec. 6.

* Of Arlington-street, Myddleton-square.

## COMPETITION ALTAR-PIECE FOR ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, BERMONDSEY.

PAINTING and sculpture are essential as accompaniments and embellishments of architecture, and it can scarcely be said that architecture in its highest departments is complete or perfect without their aid. In the ancient Christian edifices of Europe, both were extensively employed, and painting, especially, seems to have been regarded not merely as an integral and necessary auxiliary, but in some instances as a feature of paramount importance. The architectural remains of Lombardy, of Venice, and of Sicily, with those of Normandy, and of our own country, shew that the painter was employed to an immense extent in the decorations of the altars, walls, vaulting, and other parts of churches. Passages from the Holy Scriptures; monkish legends of the lives of saints; memorials of the religious deeds of kings and princes; arabesque and floral decorations, may still be traced in abundant instances, proving incontestibly that the taste for pictorial art, and for its application to sacred purposes, flourished without interruption from the introduction of Christianity in Britain to the dissolution of monasteries by the tyrant, Henry VIII. After the Reformation, it was a favourite employment of bigots and fanatics to destroy and mutilate these, which had become objects of Roman Catholic superstition. The prejudice thus engendered against the introduction of pictures into churches, still subsists amongst many of the Protestant clergy; and has operated most unfavorably on the development of art in Britain. An unworthy parsimony in the erection of our sacred edifices has further contributed to exclude from them the works of the painter, and has thereby deprived them (with but few exceptions) of their most effective and appropriate embellishments.

We may, however, hope that a better era for art has arrived. Painting and sculpture have received their due consideration in the works in progress for the accommodation of the Houses of Parliament; and the extensive applicatinn of the ancient models to new churches in all parts of England, has induced a desire to embellish these structures somewhat in accordance with those in imitation or emulation of which they have been constructed. Hence we find that stained glass, encaustic tiles, and similar accessories, are now largely employed. It is our present object to advert to the not less important point of the introduction of paintings in churches, not built in the mode adopted in the middle ages. In these structures, modelled upon the classic forms of ancient Greece and Rome, the *altar-piece* is perhaps the only part to which painting can be successfully applied; and it is to be regretted that an object so well adapted to stimulate and exercise the powers of the artist in the highest branch of art should be so frequently neglected. Without adverting to the few pictures produced of late years as altar-pieces, we may proceed to notice the Ascension, by Mr. John Wood, which has just been completed for St. James's Church, at Bermondsey.

It appears that the late Mr. Harcourt, a wealthy inhabitant of the parish, bequeathed the sum of 500*l.* for the purchase of a picture, to be placed in a recess over the communion-table of that church. The trustees not being able to procure a satisfactory picture for the purpose, advertised for sketches, upon the understanding that the artist whose production was selected should forwith execute the work, and receive the amount of the bequest. They fixed upon the Ascension of Our Saviour as the subject, and the finished sketches in oil were required to be 36 inches in height by 17 inches in width. The altar-piece, including a frame provided by the trustees, to be 25 feet in height by 11 feet in width. On the 4th of December, 1844, nearly 80 compositions were sent in; several of them by members of the Royal Academy. Mr. Eastlake, R.A., and Mr. Haydon were appointed to examine them, and to select the most meritorious; and Mr. Cooke, R.A., was to decide in the event of those gentlemen differing in opinion. The two former however agreed that Mr. John Wood's sketch was the best of those submitted, and Mr. Cooke fully concurred in their opinion. A decision thus unanimous, by artists of such high reputation and admitted taste, naturally excited the curiosity of all lovers of the arts; and it is therefore gratifying to find that the picture, which is now completed, fully justifies the opinion so given of its merits, and reflects the highest honour on the artist.

The figures in Mr. Wood's composition are considerably above the natural size. On a canvass of 275 square feet (25 feet by 11) the artist has given, in the upper part, a full-length figure of the Saviour, occupying nearly one-half of the picture. The figure appears buoyant in air, with a nimbus around the head, the radiation from which illumines with a golden effulgence the upper region of the sky. Clothed in a flowing robe, or mantle, over a white vestment, with arms extended, and a placid expression of countenance, He casts a parting look towards his earthly disciples and associates, whilst his body is evidently in the act of ascension from them. The eleven disciples, witnesses of the superhuman event, the ascension of their lord and master into "the heaven of heavens," are at once astonished, terrified, and glorified by the beatific event. An incident so unparalled could not fail to produce varied and conflicting emotions in its witnesses. The artist has endeavoured to portray these, in the attitudes and expression of the apostles. They are represented in various positions; standing, kneeling, prostrated, with uplifted hands and faces, bodies bent with reverential awe and devotion. The artist has apparently familiarized himself with the best accounts and representations of the age, personal character, and costumes of the time which he had to depict; and he must have attained a high proficiency in his art to have given not only variety, but almost personal identity to the eleven apostles he has represented, and to have clothed them in costume which, both in form and colouring, should satisfy the eye of the critic, and the feelings of the Christian.

The production is one that can hardly fail to advance the character of the British school; and to advance its meritorious author considerably in his profession. We cannot conclude without expressing our hope that it will not be long before the name of John Wood is enrolled amongst the members of the Royal Academy.

## CONSTRUCTION OF ROOFS.

SIR,—I have been recommended by some professional gentlemen, well acquainted with your journal, to submit to you a question respecting the comparative strength of queen-post and king-post roofs. The building to which I refer is Doric, the pediment very flat, and the width of the roof 60 feet. The ceiling has sunk a few inches, in consequence of the heads of the queen-posts having yielded to the pressure, and thus, much of the weight of the roof has been brought down upon the beams. It has been suggested, that the only remedy is to substitute king-post principals; these alone having strength to bear a roof so flat as the one in question. Others contend that queen-post principals are best. By giving your opinion, you would confer a favour on many persons besides your obedient servant,

Hull, Dec. 4. H. N.

*** For the span named, we should use a queen-post roof. Both king and queen-posts should be of hard oak, and the heads if formed in the common manner, should be as small as possible, as by their shrinking, sagging is caused. To lessen the possibility of this, it is a good plan to make the end of the principal rafter abut against the straining beam; in this case the tie-beams should be each in two pieces, notched on, one on each side and bolted together.

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